

18 December 1975

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MEMORANDUM FOR:

SUBJECT : Context System

Objective: To provide a secure, remote conferencing capability to the Community for use in crisis management.

Purpose of Briefing USIB: To demonstrate progress in development of this capability and its potential for the future. To solicit critique and endorsement of the project.

Description: The system includes a secure voice and video communications system which currently links four stations:



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The four stations can talk to each other and can review and edit documents by video means. It is capable, for example, of handling an emergency USIB meeting from remote stations.

The existing four stations are experimental. The system can be greatly expanded. At certain potential stations where wiring already exists, the hardware required to add the station would cost less than \$1,000.

System development has been a Community effort with great cooperation at all four stations. Context is expected to be fully operational in early 1976.

A supporting Context system document is in the USIB Briefing Book.

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UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

USIB-D- 71.1/8
10 December 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

SUBJECT : Project CONTEXT (Conferenced Text Editing)

1. The attached memorandum on the subject from the Chairman, Intelligence Information Handling Committee (IHC) is forwarded for the information of USIB.

2. A demonstration of Project CONTEXT will be scheduled on a USIB agenda at an early date, probably 18 December.



Executive Secretary

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Attachment

Attachment
USIB-D-81.1/8

10 December 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

SUBJECT: Project CONTEXT (Conferenced Text Editing)

1. The Director of Central Intelligence has suggested that Project CONTEXT be reported on and demonstrated to the United States Intelligence Board. The following summary serves as an introduction to the demonstration, which will take place in the CIA Operations Center, Room 6F39.

2. Purpose. CONTEXT is a project now in a developmental and test stage. Its objective is to provide a facility, centrally-located, in each of several intelligence agencies, which will combine the use of secure telephone and secure computer terminal and screen (CRT), in order to permit intelligence managers, watch officers, and/or analysts to communicate in a conference and to create, edit and coordinate the final version of a community-approved intelligence document. The novelty of the development lies in the conferencing techniques being tested in combination. These tests of man-machine interactions are believed to be in advance of any comparable efforts at research centers in the United States.

3. History and Current Status

(a) CONTEXT received its initial impetus in the Intelligence Community Staff in 1974. Advantages of a remote conferencing capability were recognized -- in which representatives of several organizations could remain at their home offices but confer collectively via a linked communications network. The advantages include the saving of travel time, the availability to each participant of his own files and in-house experts and associates, and the reduction of time to coordinate and produce a finished intelligence document.

(b) Products or situations for which CONTEXT might be used include intelligence bulletins, situation reports, post-mortems, inter-agency analysis of messages, crisis operations, ad hoc USIB meetings, et al.

(c) Initially, the CONTEXT system will include sets of interconnected equipment located at the NMIC/NMCC, State/INR, NSA/NSOC, and the CIA Operations Center.

(d) CONTEXT is being developed with the cooperation of several community organizations. The funding for the four initial stations is being provided by the DCI. IC Staff, has performed the background research on conferencing techniques and he is furnishing guidance for system development from the point of view of the potential substantive users. The Director, NSA has made available technical experts to guide the selection and installation of the CONTEXT hardware, to develop software programs, and to furnish continuing technical assistance. The Support Staff of the USIB Intelligence Information Handling Committee (IHC) is providing personnel to coordinate and operate the CONTEXT test system. This IHC staff also serves as the continuing interface with NSA on technical developments. The DIA member of the IHC Support Staff serves as the project coordinator for the IC Staff.

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(e) Test operations to develop software and procedures are now being conducted on a temporary network between the CIA Operations Center, the USIB/IHC staff offices (both in the CIA headquarters building), and the National SIGINT Operations Center (NSA/NSOC) at Fort Meade. Arrangements are now being completed with both DIA and State/INR for the installation of their CONTEXT equipment. Procurement and installation of all equipment to establish a four-agency network will be completed during FY-1976.

4. Test Program. The present tests will continue for several months, as expanded capabilities are added to the system and checked out. Limited operational use will be undertaken in the next 2-3 months, in addition to the continued program of experimentation. The latter effort focuses on the human user's reactions and needs that must be accommodated in an effective automated system.

5. System Characteristics

(a) Facilities. Each conferencing location will provide sufficient space for up to 12 people, and has been selected on the basis of its accessibility to managerial, operational and analytical personnel. The CONTEXT equipment occupies about 48 square feet in the conferencing room. The conferencing space is reasonably quiet, with adjustable lighting, and suitable for group discussions.

(b) Hardware. Each CONTEXT conferencing site will be equipped with the following devices, which are interconnected in a network.

(1) Secure phone. A secure telephone instrument, with speakerphone is provided. It currently operates on the grey phone circuits. In the near future a dedicated secure circuit will link the four CONTEXT sites. The equipment is manufactured by Stromberg-Carlson. Conversations can be carried on via the hand set or speakerphone.

(2) CRT terminal. An INCOTERM CRT and keyboard are provided at each location. The display unit (CRT) is itself a mini-computer, with 4K memory and 2K screen refresh memory. The movable keyboard has 24 programmable function keys in addition to the standard alphanumeric keyboard. The screen can display either 64 or 80 characters per line, for a total of up to 30 lines on a 12-inch screen.

(3) Data storage. A "floppy disk" unit provides total data storage capacity of 262K 8-bit characters on two disk drives. Each disk is removable, and data can be stored on additional disks.

(4) Printer. A Texas Instrument Silent 700 printer is provided at each site. This electrostatic printer operates at 30 characters per second and can print both upper and lower case characters.

(5) Large Screen Monitor. A CONRAC 23-inch CRT monitor is provided at each site. The monitor is similar to those used in airline terminals. These units are now being tested and installed by NSA. They will allow a larger-sized display of the same textual material that appears on the INCOTERM screen.



Chairman
USIB/IHC

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